

We now know that *M. badius* is the only species that does its own sitting and hatching, and that *M. rufo-axillaris* is its chief aggressor, and as we also know that *M. rufo-axillaris* is parasitical on three other species, those eggs which agree should belong to one and the same species.

The text-figures (above, p. 278) shew better than any description the differences between the eggs of these two birds, though they can be also separated by the colour, the eggs of *M. badius* being nearly always greyer than those of *M. rufo-axillaris*.

The four species on which *M. rufo-axillaris* is parasitical are:—*Mimus modulator*, *Agelæus thilius*, *Pseudoleistes virescens*, and *Molothrus badius*.

### XIII.—Note on the *Ruticilla nigra* of Giglioli.

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IN the 'Bulletin' of the British Ornithologists' Club for 1903, xiii. p. 79, there appeared for the first time the description by Prof. Giglioli of a supposed new species of Redstart from Sardinia, under the name *Ruticilla nigra*.

Strange to say, the female was described as precisely similar to the male, for it is well known that females of the genus *Ruticilla* are constantly different from the males.

The type male specimen had been entrusted to the Hon. W. Rothschild, together with the description, to exhibit to a Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club. Mr. Rothschild said he was inclined to think that the supposed new species might possibly be based on melanistic examples, remarking, however, that the alleged similarity of the female was rather against his theory. On the other hand, Dr. Hartert, on the same occasion, said he had not the slightest doubt that the species was nothing but a melanistic variety; he stated, besides, that he felt sure that the supposed female had been incorrectly sexed.

Later, in the October number of 'The Ibis' for the

same year (p. 581), appeared a full account of the supposed new species by Prof. Giglioli, under the title "On a presumed new Species of Redstart from the Island of Sardinia" ('Ibis,' 1903, pp. 581-584). Here we were told that the two birds described had been captured alive by a Sardinian shepherd, who, having no cage, put them in a lamp or lantern, which I suppose must have been very smoky. This circumstance awoke a suspicion that the melanism suggested by Rothschild and Hartert was artificial.

Prof. Giglio-Toss, who has succeeded Prof. Giglioli at Florence, at my request has sent to me the two typical birds, and it has been sufficient to wash the tail and a wing of one with soap and water or with benzene, while using a white camel's-hair pencil, to have the pencil blackened as well as my fingers and the towel, while the dark coloration of the tail was paling and getting redder.

This result was witnessed by all the staff of the Museum, Prof. Camerano, Count Peracca, Prof. Cognetti, Dr. Borelli, Dr. Zavattari, and by Prof. Giglio-Toss.

The two birds examined are *Ruticilla titys* accidentally smoked. No doubt both specimens are males, as positively stated by Dr. Hartert. As to the alleged differences in the sternum and pectoral *arch*, I leave the subject to my friend Prof. Giglio-Toss to investigate, but I doubt whether they will be confirmed. As regards the asserted differences in size between the two Sardinian birds and those from continental localities, there are none; at least the bill, the wing, the tail, and the tarsus are absolutely similar: the size of the two birds appears smaller on account of the way in which they have been stuffed.

It is especially worth mentioning that the specimen marked *male* is not symmetrical, having the feathers of the right side of the abdomen grey, almost as in normal *R. titys*, while the left side is blackened by a more complete smoking.